

Shampoo Oedipal symmetries and heterosexual satire

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"Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus?"

— Roland Barthes [\[1\]](#)

"One man gouging out his eyes is tragedy. Three, make comedy." — Ann Darr [\[2\]](#)

In SHAMPOO during a 1968 election night Republican banquet in Beverly Hills, businessman Lester Karp tells a dinner companion.

"Yeah, you should've seen those little kids, Senator. About 40 of them. All blind. We put mattresses on the front lawn. They came running out of the house, tripping and stumbling all over the place ... just having a hell of a good time. I mean they were blind, of course, but... I don't know, it gives you a feeling of accomplishment. I can't tell you when I had such a good time."

If we take Lester as a fool, if we appreciate the satire, here's a neat example of capitalist patriarchy's ideological perversion held up for ridicule.

SHAMPOO (1975, d. Hal Ashby) extends this criticism in its dramatic narration and multiplies it through structural repetitions, through oedipal symmetries. How it does so is my interest here. Because the film is well known and accessible, I have omitted a good deal of supporting detail from my argument. Constructed on current mainstream Hollywood lines, the film uses familiar dramatic narration in the service of Hollywood realism (all elements tend to reinforce a central narrative and meaning). For this reason I will not discuss elements of editing,

color cinematography, acting, art direction, sound editing, etc. very extensively because they enhance rather than qualify or contradict my analysis. Without the clutter of detailed support, my main ideas stand out more clearly, and I am not interested in providing a definitive analysis of SHAMPOO. Rather I am reflecting on the nexus of sexuality, power, and possession embodied in its fantasy structure.

The Comic Oedipal Structure

SHAMPOO's basic structure is the comic oedipal situation. Found in many film and stage comedies, the typical oedipal configuration presents a father-and-son rivalry for a woman (mother/ wife/ lover/ betrothed/etc.), and, due to the son's incestuous attraction to the woman (who is initially linked to the father), the rivalry operates as a power struggle within an authority relation. [3] Of course this situation has long been a dramatic convention in Western literature and theatre and frequently noted. For instance, literary theorist Northrop Frye, in discussing what he calls the "normal phase" of comedy, identifies its characteristic conflict as oedipal. [4] For convenience, the oedipal structure can be diagrammed:

Father and Son are rivals for a Woman (or Possession) [5]

An historically developed dramatic convention in comedy, the oedipal situation has several noteworthy characteristics. Initially the father controls the woman, and/or he has an advantage over the son. The narrative ridicules the father and treats him as an object or comic butt. Significantly, neither is he the center of attention, nor are we made sympathetic to his side of the struggle. Finally, when ousted from his position, a shift of power takes place. While at first the son is at a disadvantage and chaffs, the younger man finally triumphs, winning power over the father and the woman. Frye notes that this usually appears as the formation of a new society, often marked by a celebration, such as the wedding of the son and the woman. In this triangle, the female arbitrates her own position within a given patriarchal structure; she can choose between the two rivals. Because the woman negotiates her fate, adultery becomes an important comic theme. The narrative provides both aggression against the father and prohibited love in a comic and acceptable form. As the son wins, fantasy triumphs.

SHAMPOO's action shows a set of related transformations of the basic comic oedipal structure. As the film begins. George (Warren Beatty) appears in bed with a married woman, Felicia (Lee Grant). Shortly he departs to see his steady, Jill (Goldie Hawn). As events unfold leading up to a political banquet scene where all the major characters are brought together, we meet Felicia's husband. Lester (Jack Warden), his mistress, Jackie (Julie Christie), Felicia and Lester's daughter, Lorna (Carrie Fisher), and Johnny Pope (Tony Bill). Johnny pursues Jill,

Lorna pursues George, and George and Jackie recommence their former romance. Diagrammatically:

The principal situations:

- Lester and George are rivals for Felicia.
- Lester and George are rivals for Jackie.

A counterpoint situation:

- George and Johnny are rivals for Jill.

And a minor electra situation:

- Felicia and Lorna are rivals for George.

The banquet and a subsequent all-night party provide the recognition scenes. George ends up with Jackie, and Jill with Johnny. Felicia and Jill realize George has been deceiving them, and Lester finds his wife has been having an affair with George and his mistress making love with this rival.

In the classic oedipal structure, as found in English Restoration comedy, the son (the rake) wins, confirming a "natural" hierarchy in which virtue is equated with unsentimental self-knowledge, and the superior insights of a few justify duping the fools and ridiculing the self-deceived. But George is not a true rakish hero, for in the end he does not triumph but faces defeat, and the governing hierarchy reveals itself as one based on wealth and the personal power accruing to wealth. Everyone triumphs but George: Johnny gets Jill; Jill gets Johnny and advances her modeling career by agreeing to go to Egypt with him to make a tv commercial; Lester gets Jackie; Jackie gets Lester, who means money and security; and Felicia will get her freedom via an expensive divorce settlement. Even Lorna has gotten what she wants: one-upping her mother by making love with her mother's lover. Another ironic triumph, the 1968 election of Nixon and Agnew, provides the backdrop for the whole process.

Structure Considered

The oedipal structure offers a model to examine the way many dramatic films utilize a complex intersection of power and sexuality, of the political and personal. It also provides a way of discussing the relations between film and society. According to traditional Freudian views, the formation of the oedipal complex constitutes a basic process of child development and the most elaborate of a series of forms through which the infant becomes an adult and in which pleasure, power, and sexuality are produced in practice and in the individual's comprehension of self and the social world. In reproducing oedipal configurations, SHAMPOO

presents fantasy material in disguised forms which appear both intriguing and enjoyable in their art.

Although it offers a starting point for analysis, the Freudian explanation (and its Lacanian variations) abstracts the oedipal structure from any social determination outside the family. In Marxist terms, psychoanalysis removes the family from commodity production and history, thus repeating the capitalist division between the productive sector and the personal sector while it takes the latter as its object of study without any regard to the former. Certainly infant sexuality is first formed within the family. But we must also consider the family as formed historically. Social relations between children and adults, men and women, must be seen in their historical development and in the broad context of the entire society.

The comic oedipal situation enacts a fantasy based on patriarchal social relations. The artistic presentation of this fantasy structure appeals precisely because the audience has a nearly universal experience (in the Western family) of the psychological patterns and tensions the structure embodies. We can see similarities between patriarchally structured human relations as experienced individually and socially in the varying patterns of the Western family unit, the dramatic situations found in SHAMPOO, and the audience members' minds and patterns of response. In short, we are talking about different manifestations of ideology. Ideology is not simply a set of "false ideas" which can be easily replaced with a set of "correct ideas." Rather, it exists in social practice, in everyday activity, in the present, and as history and memory in the individual's conscious/unconscious life. Thus at times the oedipal configuration is known through direct experience as a family member, while at other times it is recognized through mass culture.

In the comic oedipal situation, as is typical of many ideological forms, we see an aspect related to reality (fathers have power, sons chaff at that, men treat women as objects of exchange, etc.) and an aspect which attempts to resolve, to change, that reality (the comic triumph). In his book on jokes Freud pointed out this relation between reality's constraints and people's critical impulse against those restrictions.

"What these jokes whisper may be said aloud: that the wishes and desires of men have a right to make themselves acceptable alongside of exacting and ruthless morality. And in our days it has been said in forceful and stirring sentences that this morality is only a selfish regulation laid down by the few who are rich and powerful and who can satisfy their wishes at any time without postponement. So long as the art of healing has not gone further in making our life safe and so long as social arrangements do no more to make it more enjoyable, so long will it be impossible to stifle the voice

within us that rebels against the demands of morality." [6]

This is a particularly interesting passage because it presents one of Freud's more open political statements. The discussion continues with a statement that begins as a possible political program, but which ends in despair:

"... one must not fulfill the demands of one's own needs illegitimately, but must leave them unfulfilled, because only the continuance of so many unfulfilled demands can develop the power to change the order of society. But not every personal need can be postponed in this way and transferred to other people, and there is no general and final solution to the conflict." [7]

Freud goes on to describe these types of jokes as cynical jokes and says they are often directed against marriage,

"strictly guarded by moral regulations but at the same time more inviting to attack ... There is no more personal claim than that for sexual freedom and at no point has civilization tried to exercise severer suppression than in the sphere of sexuality." [8]

Freud then goes on to quote a sexist joke as an example, and he exhibits his own sexism in the process: "A wife is like an umbrella — sooner or later one takes a cab." [9]

Freud's insights are marred severely by his inability to grasp class and sexual oppression and his own complicity in it. The joke he quotes obviously does not simply refer to the institution of marriage, it attacks women at the same time — the wife and the prostitute — but Freud does not see that demeaning dimension, and his own implication in women's oppression when he tells the joke. While delivering severe criticisms of marriage as an institution, he looks almost totally from the male point of view. Freud provides only a partial analysis. While he notices and criticizes some oppressive aspects of social life, without a fuller understanding of patriarchy and capitalism, he can only propose partial — and thereby unsatisfactory — solutions. [10] Perhaps he realized this himself, since it fits with his consistent pessimism regarding social change and progress.

One aspect of Freud's thought seems useful for a radical understanding of structures in film. His awareness of two aspects of the joke — the first linked to the reality of an oppressive social situation, and the second transcending the first — provides an important insight for understanding the comic oedipal structure. By portraying a comic triumph, by granting the pleasure principle power over the reality principle, the comic oedipal structure affirms the possibility and the

desirability of change from the dominant order, of getting beyond the status quo.

SHAMPOO tempers, even reverses, this comic triumph by a narrative movement recuperating the action into the reality principle. While the initial stages of the action give George the comic triumph of cuckolding Lester by way of both Felicia and Jackie, the action turns out to be ironic, and George ends up losing Felicia to her divorce settlement, Jackie to Lester, Jill to Johnny, and being used in a low grade revenge by Lorna. Everyone wins except George. We see another implication built into the narrative since Nixon-Agnew's election which accompanies the action can only be read as a triumph for deceit and hypocrisy in this post-Watergate film. By extension, the film shows its characters as part of that cheap delusion. This too can be understood as an oedipal situation, but without a comic triumph for the underdog.

*Nixon (the Beverly Hills Republicans)
vs. the Younger Generation (George) as rivals for the USA.*

Although this structure leads to a critique, the critique still remains thin bourgeois ideology because it eliminates class as a meaningful term. At this rate it might seem that everything is oedipal. Not quite. But many power conflicts can be phrased in oedipal terms. The comic oedipal situation represents social reality and also moves to change that reality in a comic triumph which provides a fantasy solution, a utopian element which *can be* read as politically progressive. I want to stress that "can be" read, for critics often mistakenly assume that a structure must convey a singular fixed meaning, and I want to argue for a plurality of meanings. To examine the multiplicity of interpretation, I will proceed by a different route and consider the main character in SHAMPOO, George.

A Working Class Anti-hero

In contrast to every other significant character in the film, George is clearly working class. The point comes across visually by his dwelling, vehicle, clothes, and social gestures, as well as in the plot. George works as a hairdresser, as the employee of a petit-bourgeois shop owner. A relatively young worker, he aspires to become petit-bourgeois himself — to own his own shop. However, he seems unfit for the aspiration. He has not internalized petit-bourgeois values. He refuses to carry out the shop policy to "nickel and dime" the customers for coffee. He does not have the cleverness to manipulate his way into institutions. He does not have the first idea of how to get a bank loan to start his shop. He *does* have his trade (he went to beauty school, not college), good looks (but not a mastery of bourgeois social graces, as revealed in a number of small details), and an understanding of female psychology which he uses to manipulate women. But that is not enough for lasting success, as opposed to momentary sexual conquests, in the bourgeois world of

Beverly Hills.

George provides the dramatic viewpoint for the entire action. Through him the audience approaches the situation; he acts as our reference for the action. This is not a matter of identification but rather of George's position within the film's dramatic and filmic organization. We do not identify with George, we do not like him, and we do not take what he says as the truth. Or if we do, only with massive adjustments. In short, he is an anti-hero: a protagonist with whom we do not positively identify, but through whom we understand and evaluate the action.

At the end George loses everything because of his inability to stay with anything. Jackie explains the break up of her previous affair: "George was too much of a gypsy for me." Jill tells him to

"... stop kissing everyone's ass that comes into that shop. That's not going to put you in business. That's going to make you a kiss-ass.

George: Jill, I'm trying to get things moving.

Jill: Oh, grow up. You never *stop* moving. You never go anywhere. Grow up! Grow up! Grow up."

George constantly moves from woman to woman — a movement underlined with numerous transition shots of him on his motorcycle. (One of the few instances in recent Hollywood film where transportation transition shots actually have a theme and character-revealing importance.) He also constantly changes his words to fit his situation. But his verbal cameleonism with women also limits him. He finally runs out of credible lies for each of them and he loses Jill, Jackie, and Felicia. The only time when we get a sense of George reflecting rather than instantly reacting comes after he has lost the three women and returns to the shop. His assistant, Mary, a middle-aged black woman, tells him that the boss's son, a young enlisted Marine (Mary's son is also a Marine), just died in an auto accident. Stunned, George sits staring at the floor. A short moment, but the implicit parallel to himself is clear: he could have been that Marine; it fits his class position.

The action defines George throughout in terms of the women and not only in terms of his taking advantage of them. In a curious way he belongs in a lower station in society, with women. We see this most clearly with Jackie and Jill, whose characters are partially revealed in their respective houses. Jackie's has been done completely by a decorator — attractive but nothing personal in it. Jill's place seems almost out of a magazine, but not quite: she sticks little magnets shaped like fruit on her refrigerator door, and she has a cluttered night table beside her bed. In many ways Jackie acts as an older version of Jill — more sophisticated, more cynical, more jaded. Both want security. For

Jill this means marriage — love, economic security, children. She has read in *Cosmopolitan* that women should have their first child before reaching 30 and tries the idea out on an uninterested George. Jackie thinks this is no world to bring children into. Jackie has given up on traditional romantic love, and in the process of the film Jill learns to give it up: she tells Johnny Pope she is not ready to think about having children yet. For Jackie, security is monetary: "Lester is really great. It's so great to wake up in the morning with your rent paid." The prostitution metaphor emerges clearly later. When Jackie asks George if he likes her hairstyle, he responds, "It makes you look like a hooker," And when Lester calls Jackie a whore, George answers that you could call everyone that.

Jackie and Jill, mistress and model, are making the conventional best of their situations: trading their looks for moving up materially in the world. George has his looks, but cannot (by temperament) trade them to move up. Of course, he could marry into money, but there is no way a divorced Felicia would marry George. For Felicia, George serves basically as a fling.

While Felicia seems a minor role, she actually is pivotal in understanding the action. She has accepted the system: marriage, wealth, housewifery, and motherhood. But she rebels against it, trying to capture something of her own, and she has taken George as a lover. When she realizes that both her husband and George are unfaithful, she sues for divorce. She stays within the system but also sees it clearly, and at the Beverly Hills Republican victory dinner Felicia serves as our reference for the action. While Senator East delivers an after-dinner speech of astonishing stupidity to attentive wealthy Republicans,

"Felicia (stoned): These people are concerned about more than each other. Is that right?

Lester: Yes, that's right. Some of us are trying to make this country a better place to live, believe it or not.

Felicia: Is that what this is about?

Felicia: Lester, you are a miserable human being. You're not helping anybody. Just twisting arms here ... raising money, for what? A lot of silly sons of bitches."

Felicia has the most acute political analysis of the electoral process of any of the film's characters, due to her frustrated and alienated position as a woman within her privileged upper bourgeois class. Later in the film the political point emerges explicitly when Lester confronts George.

"Lester: I don't know how a guy like you thinks. What do you? Get your kicks sneaking around behind people's backs taking advantage of them? Is that your idea of being anti-establishment?"

George: I'm not anti-establishment.

Lester: Was it me? You have something against me?

George: You think I planned it?

Lester: Jackie ... Felicia ... did they have something against me?

George: What am I going to tell you they got against you? Christ, they're women, aren't they? Did you ever listen to women talk, man? Do you? 'Cause I do 'til it's running out of my ears. I mean, I'm on my feet all day long and all I do is listen to women talk, and they only talk about one thing: how some guy fucked them over. That's all I ever hear about. Did you ever think about that?

Lester: I follow your thinking on that.

George: Let's face it. We're always trying to nail them and they know it. They don't like it. They like it, and they don't like it. It's got nothing to do with you, Lester. It just happened. Felicia's got nothing to do but shop and get her hair done. She's getting older, and her daughter hates her."

Insecurity motivates the women. Felicia needs assurance she is sexually attractive. In one scene in the shop, to bolster her spirits, George holds Felicia's head, hair wet and stringy, and calls out to the others present, "Hey, Felicia looks great, doesn't she?" "Great, great." (The repetition of "great" is a *leitmotif*, becoming increasingly hollow in its overuse.) Felicia smiles a little.

Jill too wants security and sees that as marriage to George. She thus accepts, during a quarrel with him, his hypocritical confession that all he wants is to have his own shop and grow old with her. A moment later Jill's belief in his words disappears as she finds another woman's earring in his bed.

Jackie, angry at Lester's neglect of her at the dinner party, runs off with George, but her ambivalence (which initially allows romantic and sexual feelings for George) firmly resolves itself the morning after on the side of monetary security — that is, Lester.

George's motivations are not clear. At times it seems he believes his lies, living them as compulsively as he does the rest of his life. [\[11\]](#) The film

ends with our anti-hero having lost everything: Jill, Jackie, Felicia, and his business prospects with Lester's backing. The film ends there, but the camera holds so long on George that it invites — no, demands — our evaluation of him. He still has his trade, his looks, and his way with women. But what does that add up to? — the inadequacy of his working class assets to match his middle class aspirations.

Between Screen and Audience

In the end George has to face up to the inadequacy of his working class assets to match his middle class aspirations. But does he have to? Will he? Are there not other possible interpretations of George? Of course, there are. Take the comments of someone who is quite familiar with the film, its scriptwriter, Robert Towne.

"It's a movie about people who seem to be looking for things they don't really want, people who are accepting views of themselves they don't really want. Lee Grant (playing Felicia) feels she *should* be married to this man (Jack Warden playing Lester), but it isn't going to make her happy. Julie Christie (playing Jackie) feels she *should* be made an "honest woman" with material comforts, but I don't think that would make her very happy. Goldie Hawn (playing Jill) thinks she should settle for certain things. George is really the hero of the picture. He thinks it's more important to have a good time than make a fortune, which is what everyone else is trying to do. Only George hasn't accepted somebody else's view of himself. He's very sweet: He never seduces anybody. He's really the girl in the movie, if you follow what I meant. He's really the dumb-blond in the picture. And in the end you sort of feel sorry for him. He's promiscuous yet capable of deep feelings, he's not terribly deep intellectually, but he's a nice kid." [\[12\]](#)

In the same interview, Towne says the film's ending is ambiguous, that while he was trying to show that the characters would go on in the same way, learning nothing, audiences often interpret the ending with George alone and crying as his punishment "for screwing around too much." [\[13\]](#)

The preceding analysis of George's character, either as working class anti-hero or as "dumb-blond," and other analyses of this type exist within a very specific historical framework. Our culture asks us to reify character, both agents in dramatic narratives and people we know in everyday life. Because it's so "natural" to our epoch and society, we usually forget the ideological nature of such a concept of character, that it invites us to see a dramatic agent as an individual, a complete ego, and, if not a "real person" certainly *like* a real person. Thinking of film characters in this way we are led to ask what becomes of them "after the film." The effect is compounded when we know a star image from other

films and celebrity. Warren Beatty's career pattern of playing somewhat genial "dumb" men who find themselves in a situation they can't handle is well known: *SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS*, *MICKEY ONE*, *BONNIE AND CLYDE*, *McCABE AND MRS. MILLER*, *HEAVEN CAN WAIT*, etc. Beatty's presence as George is also ironic since he had a well-publicized affair with Julie Christie, and Hollywood reporters and fan/scandal publications portray him throughout his career as a playboy.

Treating film characters as if they were real, and character (or personality) as a finite and limited thing has been compounded in our age by the tendency of Freudian thought to assume personality as a solitary reification. [14] As a psychology of individual consciousness rather than social relations, Freudian psychoanalysis reproduces one of the most central aspects of bourgeois ideology — individualism. In so doing, Freudian thought varies only superficially from common-sense psychology, of which some variant usually informs contemporary analyses of film characters. Ed Buscombe has described this pragmatic approach very well in discussing Robin Wood's analysis of Hitchcock:

"Wood's whole case for Hitchcock is based on his argument that the characters are central and that the meaning of every part of the films can only be grasped in relation to these characters ... Two points can be made about the kind of psychology Wood employs in his analysis of character. Firstly, it is a cannon sense, everyday psychology; it analyzes the motives of characters in the narrative as one might those of real people with whom one comes into contact, by assuming a simple cause and effect between what they do and why they do it. [In *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*] Roger Thornhill jumps a taxi queue; therefore he is selfish. Secondly, the psychology is strongly normative. People "ought" to behave in a certain way. The argument for using this kind of psychology in relation to Hitchcock's film is obvious enough. The film is produced within and for a certain kind of society: it therefore employs the psychology available to that society, and unless we are similarly able to employ it we cannot read the film. The problem is that there is surely a difference between employing such a psychology as a means of understanding the characters, and endorsing it as a model of what the world is and should be like." [15]

In viewing mainstream Hollywood films, viewers are expected to and do construct characters and meanings and reify them. Consider character: manuals of playwriting, scriptwriting, and screen acting clearly outline the conventions of character presentation. Manuals of cinematography and editing describe conventions for filmic completion of character. Thus, within a few shots of the opening of *SHAMPOO* the audience begins to form an impression of George, a general idea of what he is like.

In other words, the audience quickly begins to "guess" a character's class, status, life style and personality from clothing, environment, and non-verbal elements such as stature, gesture, voice inflection, etc., as well as from the verbal dramatic development and the specifically filmic progression. This constant wagering of probable interpretation against accumulating evidence quickly produces a general character configuration which can be expressed in reductionist adjectival shorthand: George is As Buscombe points out, this common sense psychology is necessary for viewing, but it is ideological as well.

How we interpret George and how we react to him and the film's conclusion and thereby how we understand their "meaning," depends in large part on what we bring to the film. Clearly, individual factors operate here, but individual factors are never autonomous because they come into being and exist within an individual's social context and are thus shared with others. The people who market Hollywood films are totally aware that different types of audiences respond differently to films. During and after the film's initial release I saw SHAMPOO a number of times with different audiences, and each kind of audience tended to have a different reaction. A preview crowd of young adults, a 22-35 year old group of media and advertising types who got freebie tickets, and the audience at a theatre located in an upper-middle class high rise apartment building, did not seem to respond well to the satire of people on the make, of personal and public morality shown equally tawdry and corrupt. Perhaps the film was hitting too close to home. In both cases, of course, the audiences had largely lived through the events of '68 culminating in Nixon's election, and clearly, from their current position, they had basically bought into that very system shown as rotten in the film. The film was perhaps too uncomfortable a mirror. In a middle class suburban shopping center, an audience that seemed predominantly middle-aged did not appear to find Lester as laughable a comic butt as did an audience in a multi-ethnic working class neighborhood, which strongly picked up on the film's ridicule of the businessman, with several people loudly calling him a "fool" several times.

These are, of course, impressions and hardly constitute scientific data. But they are suggestive, even if colored by wishful thinking on my part, because they indicate that even within a Hollywood film that manipulates identification, that gives the illusion of reality, the audience's response actually varies a good deal and this variation is probably linked to social position. In a survey of audience interpretations of the film THE PEDESTRIAN, Evan Pattak discovered a not very surprising but often ignored fact: interpretation of even the most obvious narrative elements varies immensely and includes totally contradictory understanding of the same material. In a study of THE LAST AMERICAN HERO and EVEL KNIEVEL, I showed that the narrative and central characters had a distinctly different significance

for working class people than for a middle class audience. [16] Research along these lines undercuts the common assumption by mainstream and radical critics that Hollywood films provide a single meaning.

Freud's remarks on misreading are pertinent here:

"In a very large number of cases it is the reader's preparedness that alters the text and reads into it something which he [sic] is expecting or with which he is occupied. The only contribution towards a misreading which the text itself need make is that of affording some sort of resemblance in the verbal image, which the reader can alter in the sense he requires. [17]

Freud suggests that "the reader's preparedness" changes texts Can this be extended to say a viewer's position in ideology changes her/his understanding of films? Freud explains that one's profession or present situation will shape misreading too. Clearly this needs further examination, commencing with the understanding that any theory of how films are read must include a theory of how films are misread, of how variation and difference in the audience change readings, and how this is related to class, race, sex and other social factors.

In its frequent vagueness and generality, the Hollywood film often seems distinguished by its deliberate openness to multiple interpretations. For example, JULIA presents a relation between two women which is left sexually ambiguous. (I think this is what the New Hollywood regards as "maturity" — better called coyness: you don't tell the audience everything.) As a result, the Julia-Lillian relation can be read in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. a heterosexual relation of close friendship,
2. a sexually active lesbian relation,
3. a sexually active lesbian relation, but only in adolescence,
4. a platonic lesbian relation,
5. a symbolic lesbian relation,
6. a relation of bisexual women,
7. etc., etc., etc.

This very multiplicity in possible interpretation invites — even demands — that the audience "close" the open statement about the Julia-Lillian relation. Of course, characters are not real people, and of course some of the preceding readings have more evidence in the film than others, but by its very ambiguity and multiplicity, the film does ask us to draw a conclusion — one we probably make largely with regard to non-filmic factors.

Thus if you wish it were a lesbian relation, if that is a pleasing fantasy, you might conclude that it is. On the other hand, if you are disturbed by

that idea, you might repress the thought. The multiplicity of the film interacts with significant audience variables. In a sense the film chooses to not choose — it is liberal and pluralistic in form as well as in open political content. While moving beyond the old moralism (lesbians are bad), this hip liberalism rests on the assumption that we can all be adult about lesbian love. JULIA tries to have it both ways, or all ways. It is very carefully constructed to be open to a variety of interpretations. Thus a political question (how the film will portray lesbian relations) is resolved by flattering a spectrum of diverse prejudices. Pluralism in action.

SHAMPOO operates in similar ways. The basic misunderstanding that drives the plot forward matches William Wycherley's Restoration comedy, *The Country Wife* (1672). In the play, Horner carries on affairs with impunity because husbands are convinced he is a eunuch and thus a "safe" companion for their wives. In SHAMPOO because George works as a woman's hairdresser, Lester assumes he is homosexual. The film repeats the stereotype by portraying the shop owner, Norman, and another stylist as "effeminate" in voice, gesture, etc. (In a liberal recuperation, Norman is shown to have a son whom he deeply loves.)

The misunderstanding about George's sexuality begins with the sequence in Lester's office. Lester and Jackie fight. He's jealous of her spending time with an unemployed actor, Steve.

Lester vs. Steve as rivals for Jackie.

She retorts that he doesn't spend enough time with her. Lester then thinks of having "safe" George escort Jackie to the evening's victory banquet.

The joke continues in various ways, notably in the bathroom sequence at Jackie's when Lester arrives, Jackie and George have begun lovemaking, Lester arrives, but George's affectation of an "effeminate" nervousness convinces Lester that nothing is going on. The joke continues at the banquet when Johnny — unaware that his date, Jill, has been having a long affair with George — assumes George is gay. At one point George, nervously trying to carry on small talk at the banquet, tells Lester how he would restyle Lester's hair. As George touches Lester's hair, Johnny arrives and assumes Lester is now the object of George's desire. Johnny is further confused when he sees Felicia dragging George into the women's washroom. Like much humor, the comedy here both uses and jokes with cultural stereotypes (male hairdressers are gay; gays act in certain obvious and specific ways). Because of this dual action of presenting and inverting, a strong ambiguity is established that allows for laughter, both with and at the stereotype, depending on the spectator's own frame of reference.

Such irony in the film serves Hollywood's immediate end of making

money by reaching the largest audience. Rather than the blandness of offending no one, or the calculated outrageousness of offending everyone, sensitive issues are portrayed to please almost everyone. For example, I first saw *10* (d. Blake Edwards) in a theatre in liberal, professional-managerial middle-class Evanston, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. The audience was silent during a parallel cut telephone sequence between the protagonist lyricist (Dudley Moore) and his composer partner (Robert Webber). Drinking and crying after his young male lover left him, Webber urges Moore to go back to his wife. The second time I saw the film, in small town Dixon, Illinois (Ronald Reagan's Boyhood Home), the same sequence brought much laughter and several loud exclamations of the "fucking faggot, who does he think he is" variety. The sequence clearly allows — even encourages — both readings. Each is sexist in its own way: gays have feelings just like "normal" people, but their relations are unstable and doomed, pity the old queer; or, fags are ridiculous, deluded and despicable for trying to mimic heterosexual love.

The audience uses the plurality of the film: sometimes appreciating the ambiguity, and other times attempting to close an open element. Audiences are not simply passive receptacles of film experience; they are active: constantly choosing, selecting and re-arranging the process of the film into an ordered experience. Often this becomes the attempt to construct a single unified interpretation of a character (rather like the process we all go through in trying to understand our friends and the people we work and live with). Often this process ends with the attempted reduction into a moral, or into a speculation on what will happen next. But whatever the specific reading of a film that a spectator makes, the process is a complex and active one. From this point of view, the current commonplace of semiotic-psychoanalytic-influenced criticism that "the film constructs the audience" can be seen as a very partial insight that must be completed with the observation that in many ways, "the audience constructs the film." [18]

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by Chuck Kleinhans

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Meaning and Context

In a capsule review of SHAMPOO Don Druker described the film as follows:

"A brilliant collaboration involving actor-writer Warren Beatty, co-author Robert Towne, director Hal Ashby, and co-stars Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn, Lee Grant, and Jack Warden. Genuinely funny (in a terrifying, puzzling, tragic way) this tale of sexual/political hypocrisy in Beverly Hills (circa 1968) raises the inescapable issue of the Nixon era: how can we explain away our responsibility for the moral debacle of the last seven years when our private acts mirror our public postures so unerringly? Highly recommended."

[\[19\]](#)

Similarly, Warren Beatty said,

"It's a movie about the intermingling of political and sexual hypocrisy ... We set it on election night because the point is, you see, that Nixon never really *mis*led us — he was an open book. We knew all along about Nixon, we saw through him, and *still* he was elected." [\[20\]](#)

These are fair summaries of the film's meaning. The micro-society of its characters exists in the macro-society of the United States. None of them can reject what they live. Felicia has a clear, though limited, view of it, but she is not about to opt out. Everyone gains, everyone ascends, except George.

To some extent fully understanding the political theme of the film relies on projecting oneself back to 1968, to having lived through Nixon's landslide election. Even more importantly, understanding the politics

depends on remembering the events before the election: the Tet offensive (turning point in the Vietnam war), the largest surge of the anti-war movement, the spring intensity of the student movement (particularly at Columbia), Lyndon Johnson's withdrawal from the election, the May '68 events in France and Italy, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the failure of the Gene McCarthy movement, another long, hot summer of ghetto rebellions, the Chicago Democratic convention and its police riot. Mid-'68 was also a moment when people had to decide which side they were on. And it was also a moment when the opposition movement was not strong enough to genuinely challenge the system.

Ashby, Towne, and Beatty present two parts of this American moment. We see the finale of electoral politics showing the Nixon supporters (Lester and the Republican rich) and those who reject or ignore him but who don't oppose him (George, Jackie, Jill, Felicia, Johnny, and the crowd at the continuous party estate). We also see the characters' personal and sexual situation. With everyone ascending and winning in the micro-world of the screen action, except George, and with the triumph of Nixon-Agnew on the national level, the hypocrisy theme emerges. What kind of a triumph is this? To a post-Agnew, post-Watergate, post-Nixon audience, the point is inescapable.

At the banquet ironic bits of campaign rhetoric underline the message. (Agnew on a TV monitor: "Exactly what can a President do to affect the moral tone of the country?") The next morning Lester confronts George:

"Lester: I just wish I knew what the hell I was living for.

Nixon (on TV, as a teenager held up a sign, 'Bring Us Together'): ... and that will be the great objective of this administration ...

Lester: Maybe Nixon will be better. What's the difference? They're all a bunch of jerks."

In short, Nixon was the president these people deserved.

The Personal Is Political

SHAMPOO'S comic satire rests on the presentation and Interpenetration of the realms of production and reproduction, public and personal, work and leisure, normally kept apart in capitalist society. The beauty shop in SHAMPOO has a dual aspect. It functions as a site of production, a business, and the place where George labors as a skilled craft worker. At the same time, for the customers it serves as a site of reproduction, a place where, they become conventionally attractive so they can carry out their social roles as women. The shop is an extension of the home, a place of consumption. In fact, George visits Felicia and

Lester's house to comb out her hair — business — but encounters daughter Lorna and then Felicia, both of whom entice him into lovemaking — pleasure. The same thing happens when George goes to Jackie's to do her hair. In capitalist terms, as phrased in petit-bourgeois ideology with a hint of Puritanism in the service of primitive capitalist accumulation, George's mistake in life is "mixing business with pleasure." Lester repeats the error. By bringing his mistress (pleasure) into the Republican banquet (business), he precipitates a crisis when mistress asserts pleasure in the face of Nixonian business:

"Roth: Aren't you hungry, Miss Shawn?

Jackie: Not for rubber chicken, no.

Roth: Maybe I can get you something.

Jackie: Oh, that's very sweet of you. Mr. Roth. You must be very important.

Roth: Well, whatever I am. I think I can get you whatever you'd like.

Jackie: Whatever I like.

Roth: Whatever you like.

Jackie: Most of all (gestures toward George, beside her) d like to suck his cock (crawls under table in front of George)."

In portraying the relation of production and reproduction, SHAMPOO presents an interesting set of oedipal situations.

(a) *the friendly father*

- Norman vs. George over the shop.

Norman is trying to teach George how to be a small businessman (nickel and dime the customers, be punctual, etc.) while George chaffs at the constraints of production on his leisure.

(b) *the hostile father*

- Banker vs. George over \$ to start business.

George doesn't understand the terms or manners of getting a bank loan. Frustrated, rejected, humiliated by the banker's middle-class cool, he can only respond with "you asshole!"

(c) *the rival father*

- Lester vs. George over \$ to start business.

Lester at first refuses George the money (which Felicia tried to arrange) on business grounds, but softens to "we'll see" when he needs George's help to get Jackie to the banquet.

When the oedipal structure enters the world of business, it forms the nexus of power and sex, personal and political, business and pleasure, production and reproduction. Significantly, in each of these three oedipal situations, George is basically powerless. He can gain power only in the private realm, directly by deceiving women and thereby indirectly by tricking Lester.

In a crucial article on ideological film analysis, Charles Eckert shows how the Hollywood film can deal with problems that have their source in class conflict, but by reducing them to an existential level. He shows how in MARKED WOMAN ethical and regional differences are expressed as dilemmas which stand for displaced class conflicts. [\[21\]](#) A similar operation takes place in SHAMPOO. However, the interpenetration of love and money is more complete in the later film: the oedipal love situations are doubled by the oedipal business situations.

Someone might object that taken to such a degree of generalization, the oedipal situation begins to lose meaning as a critical concept. In terms of strict Freudian analysis, certainly. But we might try to rewrite the basic oedipal situation in social terms.

Power vs. Lack of Power in pursuit of Desired Object.

In its comic form the power differential (based on any number of aspects-class, race, wealth, sex, sexual identity, age, etc.) is overcome by a fantasy triumph (for example. George cuckolds Lester) which thus presents an alternative set of values (youth, cleverness, sexuality, etc.) This set of alternatives can take on a particularly acute set of political values, as for example in Beaumarchais' 18th century comedies, *The Barber of Seville* and *Figaro's Marriage*, both of which were seen as political dramas taking a clear class stand for the rising bourgeoisie and against the aristocracy. SHAMPOO is not so optimistic, nor so obvious in its class politics. George "wins" in the sexual arena at the start only to lose in both the sexual and power realms by the end.

Kiss Oedipus Goodbye

If we assume the present social reality of a given culture will tend to be the basis for the fantasy and imaginative life of individuals in that culture, then we could also assume that a culture's art would use, repeat, and vary the patterns of social life. Such an assumption is at the center of Marxist and feminist analyses of film, however much variety (and

antagonism) we find among individual critics and however much writers may want to distance themselves from disastrously simplistic reflections theories ("film reflects life"). As I've argued, the comic oedipal situation in film can and should be understood as connected to social relations. In other words, understanding this structure helps us make connections between art and historical, material life. That is, after all, not such a peculiar path of investigation for a Marxist. But at the same time such structural analysis has been viewed skeptically at best by many Marxist culture critics and is ignored by most of them.

Marxist analyses of specific popular films tend to stay close to traditional plot, character, theme analysis — the kind of watered-down aristotelianism that dominates the high school teaching of narrative literature. It aims at finding the open or hidden meaning of a film in order to then judge it on a scale of political usefulness. To examine structure disrupts such procedures, and in this way structural analysis poses a decisive problem for many Marxist culture critics. I want to make it clear that I'm not claiming that my presentation of oedipal structures in SHAMPOO is exhaustive. It is literally and figuratively schematic and static and could hardly satisfy requirements for extended textual analysis (though it could be elaborated on another occasion). However, in its simplicity it still forms a sizable monkey wrench to throw into mechanical Marxist criticism. Just for openers, it shows that Marxist critics must link class with an understanding of sexual politics, for the comic oedipal structure is clearly a patriarchal one, not universal but actively present in different class societies. It also shows there is a level and kind of textual activity which takes place "below" the film's surface and the viewer's consciousness.

Considering comic oedipal structures lets us see not only repeated patterns, but also changes on those patterns — variations which themselves are revealing. The structure centers its power in the rivalry of men — a rivalry which embodies power, competition and aggression and which plays out the scenario of sexual control. For indeed, it is in the relations of men and in the changing tensions of that relation that the structure establishes the basis for audience recognition. We could think of that obligatory sequence in wild animal documentaries where males pair off to fight for territory and for possession of a female while she sits on the sidelines in apparent disinterest. And we see all around us ample evidence that it is precisely in antagonistic relations with other men that heterosexual men invest much of their energy. The truth is in the fight, not in the prize. [\[22\]](#)

Father vs. Son as rivals for Woman/Possession.

Women stay figuratively on the sidelines, empowered at best to aid, abet, encourage: cheerleaders. But when we shift the dramatic point of view to the woman, the structure takes on a new resonance. For

example, the third part of LUCIA (Cuba, Humberto Solás, 1959) presents a standard marital farce situation set in the first stages of socialism. Once married, male chauvinist hubby becomes insanely jealous when an attractive young man from Havana arrives to teach Lucia literacy. While the film does not totally shift dramatic point of view to Lucia, it privileges her desire for independence through the validation of a chorus-like community and witty didactic refrains from *Guantanamera*, the improvisation-based national song. Lucia walks out of the possessive relation with her husband and into the supportive community of women in her work brigade. DAISIES (Czech, Vera Chytilova, 1966) provides another example. Two young women, complaining that there's no place for them in society, proceed to have a zany series of adventures which feature putting men on and ridiculing their pretensions while the film visually underlines the events with visuals such as the pair spearing, roasting, and eating phallic sausages. Another irreverent pair of women in CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING (France, 1974, Jacques Rivette) demolish men and male authority in whacky escapades. [\[23\]](#)

By shifting the dramatic viewpoint to the women we obtain a different perspective on the comic oedipal situation, one which mocks and satirizes the importance usually given the male power struggle itself. The Soviet comedy BED AND SOFA (USSR, 1927. Abram Room) portrays a *ménage à trois* in which a wife transfers her affections and body from husband to husband's buddy. Later, finding herself pregnant, she realizes she wants neither man, takes control of her destiny by walking out on the guys, and sets off on her own as a single mother-to-be. [\[24\]](#) Sometimes the only way out of a double bind is the door. Today filmmakers and other artists concerned with breaking from the dominant ideology must consider radically critiquing the oedipal structure and leaving it behind.

Images and captions:

1. George on his motorcycle: In SHAMPOO, transportation transition sequences serve to develop plot and character. Today this tends to be the exception because transportation transitions are so common in television thematic series and made-for-TV movies where they generally serve as cheap filler, shots easily edited to different length for padding out or shortening the narration as needed to get to the new commercial break. They often serve as outdoor establishing sequences (we are in L.A., or N.Y. or Paris, etc.), which can be stock shots or inexpensive extreme long shots with a moving vehicle (often a landscape or cityscape, often combined with a zoom and modest pan), shot with inexpensive stand-ins for the stars. They are also popular because they can be easily intercut with vehicle interior sequences which, being a standard studio set up, are fairly easy and inexpensive. The vehicles in

SHAMPOO reinforce the characters. George drives a Triumph motorcycle, Lester a Rolls Royce, Jackie a Mercedes sedan, Felicia, a black Cadillac, Johnny a red Porche, and a Mustang is parked outside of Jill's place. The cars reveal statue and hint at personality traits. In the hands of some directors, cars embody personality, as in those great stylists of hyperbole, Russ Meyer and Douglas Sirk.

2. Jill and George sitting in bed: Jill stares vacantly at the television, changing channels with the remote control, while George talks. This is a fairly contemporary gesture for actors: the TV stare usually accompanied by diffuse blue-green waist-high lighting. The TV point of view shot is an increasingly common one in the past 25 years of American film. Here it is used alone, without the reverse shot showing what is on TV, continuing the film's dichotomy of public events vs. private lives, often expressed with TV sets with no one watching.

3. Jackie and George standing next to each other in the parking garage: After running into each other at Lester's office, Jackie and George talk in the garage. Although this production still does not resemble a shot in the film, it displays Jackie's initial hairstyle which George says makes her look like a hooker. The film uses period hairstyles, circa 1968, which are coded as dated by 1975 when the film was released. Jackie's streaked hair, falling in curls below the shoulder, is redone by George in a uniform blonde to fall straight to the shoulder and curl under, a more "classic" style with connotations of maturity, restraint, expensive taste. These connotations are reinforced by the contrast with the initial style's connotations — flashy, sexy, pointedly artificial — echoed in her clothing and jewelry.

I've heard an apocryphal story that the film was shown on first release to a large convention of hair stylists who warmly appreciated it. For such an audience the plot and character significance of hairstyle would be more actively part of the film experience. George's hair is styled to have a slightly windblown, disheveled look with loose curls and locks, as if he were distracted, busy, and without time to get all the details in order: a metaphor for his life.

4. Close up of Lorna, Felicia and Lester's daughter, in a tennis outfit: Felicia and Lester's daughter, Lorna (Carrie Fisher), tells George that she's never been inside a beauty shop. The extent of her rebellion against her parents can be judged by her Lacoste tennis wear, which she wears on the family court while playing with a hired professional partner.

5. George's beauty shop: Felicia fingers her wet hair in the foreground at the beauty shop while George talks with Jill, who has dropped in for an urgent personal discussion. This production still does not match any shot in the film, although it reproduces figuratively the dramatic situation found in this sequence. George is between two women. Jill

assumes that Felicia is only a customer. Felicia suspects that any woman who feels free to call George away from work must be a rival.

6. Medium shot of George, Jill, and Felicia: Arriving at the Republican banquet, Jill in wool bouclé and Jackie in a fur discover that they and Felicia all have the same basic hairstyle — not surprising since they all have the same hairstylist. Still, it's embarrassing under the circumstances, though this is not explicitly brought out.

7. Felicia, Lester, Jackie, and George standing together at the Republican banquet: Felicia and Jackie, wife and mistress, meet and face off with Felicia at a disadvantage in her liter girl sailor suit up against Jackie's sequined black sheath. Jackie wins the round by turning her back on Felicia, revealing a back cut open down to the bottom of her spine.

8. Close up of Lester and Felicia: At the election party, Felicia announces her divorce by asking Lester if he likes Jackie, adding that he'd better, because Jackie's going to be very expensive (when Lester adds in Felicia's divorce settlement).

9. Men sitting around Julie Christie: The film uses the prostitution metaphor but doesn't reflect on how its makers could be seen as pimping off Julie Christie although they are quite aware of the film's commodity nature and how their jobs serve the end of making money. What is not said, what goes without saying, is ideological. Here is an excerpt for an interview with screenwriter Robert Towne from *American Film* (1:3, Dec. 1975, p. 44):

What is behind the moment in the party scene when Julie Christie goes under the table?

Towne: At this point — probably \$30 million of film rental.

It's a large success, isn't it?

Towne: I'm told it's the biggest financial success Columbia Pictures has ever had.

Notes

[1.](#) Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, tr. Richard Miller (NY: Hill & Wang, 1975), p. 47.

[2.](#) Ann Darr, "Dear Oedipus," in *We Become New: Poems by Contemporary American Women*, ed. Lucille Iverson and Kathryn Ruby (NY: Bantam, 1975), p. 147.

[3.](#) Analysis of this structure was first presented by Ludwig Jeckels, "Zur Psychologie der Komodie," *Imago*, 12 (1926). 328-335. Charles Mauron elaborates on it in *Des Metaphores obsédantes cm mythe personnel* (Paris: Corti, 1962) and *Psychocritique du genre comique* (Paris: Corti,

1964). Mauryon also points out the common good son/bad son variant which is prevalent in comedy. Non-comic versions of the oedipal structure appear in melodrama, tragedy, and modernist dramatic narratives.

4. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (NY: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 163-186.

5. In some works, particularly Roman comedy, the rivalry is over the father's money. When possessions form the third element, the rivalry often appears between a master/father and a servant/son. The substitution of woman/possession makes it clear that females are objects of exchange in the structure.

6. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, tr. James Strachey (NY: Norton, 1960), p. 110. The use of "men" is quite accurate here.

7. Freud, *Jokes*, p. 110.

8. Freud, *Jokes*, p. 110.

9. Freud, *Jokes*, p. 110. Freud explains that the joke depends on a simile, an allusion, and an omission, and elaborates:

"One [male) marries in order to protect oneself against the temptations of sensuality, but it turns out nevertheless that marriage does not allow the satisfaction of needs that are somewhat stronger than usual. In just the same way, one takes an umbrella with one to protect oneself from the rain and nevertheless gets wet in the rain. In both cases one must look around for a stronger protection: in the latter case one must take a public vehicle, and in the former a woman who is accessible in return for money ... One does not venture to declare aloud and openly that marriage is not an arrangement calculated to satisfy a man's sexuality The strength of this joke lies in the fact that nevertheless — in all kinds of roundabout ways — it *has* declared it." (p. 111)

10. For Freud, the goal of the psychic activity as expressed in the concept of the pleasure principle is to reduce tension, avoid pain, and find pleasure. At the same time, the reality principle intervenes and shapes the pleasure principle:

"the search for satisfaction does not take the most direct routes but instead makes detours and postpones the attainment of its goal according to the conditions imposed by the outside world."

(J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith. London: Hogarth, 1973, p. 379)

[11.](#) George participates in the deceit and hypocrisy but seems to be pardoned, or at least less venial, because his motivations involve the immediate libidinal pleasure of making love with a willing woman, and because he loses in the end while others win. The others' motives seem "worse" in the film's moral universe: revenge, money, career advancement, insecurity, boredom, etc. These motives could be connected to the characters' class positions, though the film does not provide much evidence for so doing. Such an interpretation would probably justify George's deceit and hedonism as more "honest" and "natural," (workers are children?) and suppress the sexual politics involved,

[12.](#) Robert Towne, quoted in "Movies: Robert Towne — script, scalpel, action. Oscar," by Gene Siskel, *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1976, Section 6, p. 6

[13.](#) Robert Towne, quoted in "'Shampoo' ending you didn't see," by Gene Siskel, *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1976, section 6, p. 2. Towne explains another conclusion he wrote.

"The way 'Shampoo' would have ended — if we had shot the extra scene, was with a jump forward in time six years to 1974. In the scene Julie and Goldie Hawn are having lunch at Mildred Pierce's, the same restaurant they were in at the beginning of the picture. Only now Julie is married to Jack Warden and is having the same complaints as Lee Grant's character had. And Goldie is now a kept woman like Julie had been. We showed all that in a couple of sentences of dialog. Then, all of a sudden, there's the sound of a motorcycle and George drives up with a 20-year-old blonde. He goes into the restaurant to pick up an order, and while he's inside Julie and Goldie go over to the girl on the motorcycle and ask her how George is doing. She says [in repetition of the film's most oft-repeated line], 'Oh, George is great.' And then she adds, 'He's going to open his own [hairdressing] shop soon.' That ending would have showed more of the feeling we were after, that George had recovered from the Julie Christie incident, that he was still trying to open his own shop, and that most likely he wasn't going to live a terribly successful life."

[14.](#) R.D. Laing remarks in *The Politics of Experience* (NY: Ballantine, 1968), p. 49:

"The metapsychology of Freud, Federn, Rapaport, Hartman, Kris, has no constructs for any social system generated by

more than one person at a time. Within its own framework it has no concepts of social collectivities of experience shared or unshared between persons. This theory has no category of 'you,' as there is in the work of Feuerbach, Buber, Parsons. It has no way of expressing the meeting of an 'I' with 'an other,' and the impact of one person on another. It has no concept of 'me' except as objectified as 'the ego.'"

[15.](#) Ed Buscombe, "Psychoanalysis and the Cinema," BFI Education Department mimeo paper, c. 1976, pp. 1-2. A similar point was made by Alan Lovell in *Screen*, 10:2 (Mar./Apr. 69) and responded to by Wood in the following issue. In the U.S., Joan Mellen provides many examples of positing the critic's personal preferences as gauges for character evaluation in her study of male star roles, *Big Bad Wolves*. Julia Lesage critiqued this problem in reviewing Mellen's *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film* (JUMP CUT, no. 1 (Nay/June '74)).

[16.](#) Evan Pattack, "Responses to THE PEDESTRIAN: Walking to the Sounds of Different Drummers," JUMP CUT, no. 7 (May-July '75), 24-26. Kleinhans, "EVEL KNIEVEL and THE LAST AMERICAN HERO: Contemporary Working Class Film Heroes," JUMP CUT, no. 2 (July-Aug. '74), 11-14.

[17.](#) Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, tr. Alan Tyson, ed. James Strachey (NY: Norton, 1960), pp. 112-113.

[18.](#) For example, Claire Johnston, "Towards a Feminist Film Practice: Some Theses," *Edinburgh 76 Magazine*, p. 50.

"The central question which psychoanalysis has raised for film theory in general and for feminist film theory in particular, is what kind of reader the film text constructs, the positioning of the subject in relation to patriarchal ideology."

And Edward Branigan, "Subjectively under Siege — From Fellini's 8-1/2 to Oshima's THE MAN WHO LEFT HIS WILL ON FILM," *Screen*, 19:1 (Spring 1978) 39.

"Just as it constructs inconsistent characters, the text [Oshima's film] constructs an inconsistent spectator."

[19.](#) Don Drucker, *Chicago Reader*, 1975, passim.

[20.](#) Beatty, interview with Roger Ebert, "What Really Thrills Warren Beatty," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Midwest Magazine, June 29, 1975, p. 6.

[21.](#) Charles Eckert, "The Anatomy of a Proletarian Film: Warner's MARKED WOMAN," *Film Quarterly*, 27:2 (Winter 73-74), 11-24.

[22.](#) Perhaps not in the gender of the prize, either. For an extended

psychoanalytic discussion of the formation of men's oedipal relations: Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1978). French feminist Monique Wittig asks of the incest taboo, what if it isn't a question of the son desiring the mother and the daughter desiring the father, but the son desiring the father and the daughter desiring the mother?

[23.](#) An extensive analysis of the film: Julia Lesage, "CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING: Subversive Fantasy," JUMP CUT, no. 24/25, 36-43.

[24.](#) The heroine isn't totally free from patriarchy: she is discouraged from having an abortion. The film's politics thus match state policy at the time.

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